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Berta Cáceres' family denounces exclusion from trial

The indigenous leader was shot on March 2, 2016 by gunmen who entered her home in the community of La Esperanza



Pascual Vásquez, leader of the Organization of the Indigenous People's Council, third from the left, and the daughters of the murdered environmentalist Berta Cáceres, Berta Zuniga Cáceres, from the right, and Laura Zúñiga Cáceres, to accompany their lawyers to the Tegucigalpa prosecutor's office. Photo: AP Agency.

AFP Agency

22.10.2018

TEGUCIGALPA, HONDURAS. - The family of the murdered Honduran environmentalist **Berta Cáceres** denounced on Monday that a court initiated the oral and public trial against eight defendants of the crime without the participation of their lawyers.

"The trial began on Saturday without the presence of our lawyers, they did not attend because they filed a challenge against the judges," Roberto Cáceres, brother of the murdered coordinator of **the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (Copinh)** , told AFP. .

The indigenous leader was shot on March 2, 2016 by gunmen who entered her home in the community of La Esperanza (west).

Roberto CáceresHe pointed out that the court ruled that the lawyers of the



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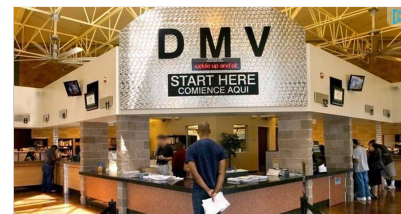
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family and of the Copinh "abandoned the case", without taking into account that they had challenged the judges for doubting their impartiality.

In the resumption of the hearing, on Monday, the prosecutor's spokesman, Yuri Mora, told AFP that the family's lawyers and Copinh were definitively excluded from the trial "by default" and that their representation was assumed by prosecutors.

The trial had been suspended for the third time last Friday, after the family and Copinh prosecuting lawyers challenged the three judges in the case.

The same petition caused the process to be suspended on September 17 and October 15.

The lawyers assured the AFP that the judges do not guarantee them a fair trial, after they refused to demand from the prosecutor all the evidence against the eight accused, which made them suspect that they intend to exonerate executives and partners from guilt. **Desarrollos Energéticos SA (DESA).**

Among the eight defendants is the environmental manager of DESA, **Sergio Rodríguez**, and members of the security team of that energy company.

Additionally, DESA Executive President David Castillo is charged in a separate trial.

Cáceres had precautionary measures from the **Inter-American Commission on Human Rights** (IACHR) after denouncing that DESA personnel threatened to kill her for organizing demonstrations of indigenous people against **the construction of a hydroelectric plant on the Gualcarque river** (west) by the company.

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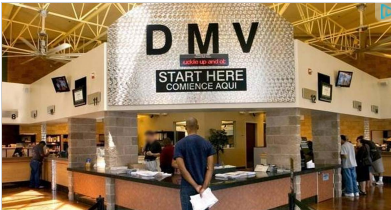
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